

## **Assembly Bill No. 628**

### **CHAPTER 532**

An act to amend Sections 38026 and 38026.5 of, and to add and repeal Section 38026.1 of, the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

[Approved by Governor October 7, 2011. Filed with  
Secretary of State October 7, 2011.]

#### **LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

AB 628, Conway. Vehicles: off-highway vehicle recreation: County of Inyo.

Existing law authorizes an off-highway motor vehicle that has been issued a plate or device to be operated or driven upon a highway under certain circumstances. Existing law authorizes various public entities, and the Director of Parks and Recreation, to designate a highway, or portion thereof, for the combined use of regular vehicular traffic and off-highway motor vehicles if certain requirements are met. Existing law prohibits a highway from being designated for this combined use for a distance of more than 3 miles.

This bill would, until January 1, 2017, authorize the County of Inyo to establish a pilot project that would exempt from this prohibition specified combined-use highways, except as provided, in the unincorporated area in the County of Inyo so that the highways can be used to link existing off-highway motor vehicle trails and trailheads on federal Bureau of Land Management or United States Forest Service lands, and to link off-highway motor vehicle recreational-use areas with necessary service and lodging facilities, in order to provide a unified linkage of trail systems for off-highway motor vehicles, among other things, as prescribed.

The bill would authorize the pilot project to include the use of a state highway, subject to the approval of the Department of Transportation, or the crossing of a highway, and would require the County of Inyo to indemnify the state, as specified. The bill would require the County of Inyo, in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, not later than January 1, 2016, to prepare and submit to the Legislature a report evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot project, and containing specified information.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

**SECTION 1.** The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Inyo County is a rural county with a population of 17,945 residents.

(b) Inyo County is comprised of 10,140 square miles.

(c) Inyo County is the second largest county in the United States in area, yet only 2 percent of this land is inhabited.

(d) Ninety-two percent of land in Inyo County is federally administered public lands.

(e) Inyo County has outstanding natural diversity, including Mount Whitney in the eastern Sierra, which is the highest peak in the contiguous United States, as well as Death Valley, which is the lowest point in the United States and the largest national park in the contiguous United States.

(f) With six million acres of public land, Inyo County offers numerous opportunities to explore and recreate.

SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature in enacting this act and designating combined-use highways on unincorporated county roads in the County of Inyo for more than three miles to link existing roads in the unincorporated portion of the county to existing trails and trailheads on federal Bureau of Land Management or United States Forest Service lands in order to provide a unified system of trails for off-highway motor vehicles. It is further the intent of the Legislature that no General Fund moneys be expended for the pilot project established by this act, and the project will be revenue neutral to the state.

SEC. 3. Section 38026 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

38026. (a) In addition to Section 38025 and after complying with subdivision (c) of this section, if a local authority, an agency of the federal government, or the Director of Parks and Recreation finds that a highway, or a portion of a highway, under the jurisdiction of the authority, agency, or the director, as the case may be, is located in a manner that provides a connecting link between off-highway motor vehicle trail segments, between an off-highway motor vehicle recreational use area and necessary service facilities, or between lodging facilities and an off-highway motor vehicle recreational facility and if it is found that the highway is designed and constructed so as to safely permit the use of regular vehicular traffic and also the driving of off-highway motor vehicles on that highway, the local authority, by resolution or ordinance, agency of the federal government, or the Director of Parks and Recreation, as the case may be, may designate that highway, or a portion of a highway, for combined use and shall prescribe rules and regulations therefor. A highway, or portion of a highway, shall not be so designated for a distance of more than three miles, except as provided in Section 38026.1. A freeway shall not be designated under this section.

(b) The Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission may propose highway segments for consideration by local authorities, an agency of the federal government, or the Director of Parks and Recreation for combined use.

(c) Prior to designating a highway or portion of a highway on the motion of the local authority, an agency of the federal government, or the Director of Parks and Recreation, or as a recommendation of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Commission, a local authority, an agency of the federal

government, or the Director of Parks and Recreation shall notify the Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol, and shall not designate any segment pursuant to subdivision (a) which, in the opinion of the commissioner, would create a potential traffic safety hazard.

(d) (1) A designation of a highway, or a portion of a highway, under subdivision (a) shall become effective upon the erection of appropriate signs of a type approved by the Department of Transportation on and along the highway, or portion of the highway.

(2) The cost of the signs shall be reimbursed from the Off-Highway Vehicle Trust Fund, when appropriated by the Legislature, or by expenditure of funds from a grant or cooperative agreement made pursuant to Section 5090.50 of the Public Resources Code.

SEC. 4. Section 38026.1 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:

38026.1. (a) Except as provided in subdivision (e), the County of Inyo may establish a pilot project to designate combined-use highways on unincorporated county roads in the county for no more than 10 miles so that the combined-use highways can be used to link existing off-highway motor vehicle trails and trailheads on federal Bureau of Land Management or United States Forest Service lands, and to link off-highway motor vehicle recreational-use areas with necessary service and lodging facilities, in order to provide a unified system of trails for off-highway motor vehicles, preserve traffic safety, improve natural resource protection, reduce off-highway vehicle trespass on private land, and minimize impacts on county residents.

(b) The pilot project shall do all of the following:

(1) Prescribe a procedure for highway, road, or route selection and designation. The procedure shall be approved by a vote of a majority of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.

(2) Prescribe a procedure for the county to remove a combined-use designation, including a designation that is removed as a result of the conclusion of the pilot program.

(3) In cooperation with the Department of Transportation, establish uniform specifications and symbols for signs, markers, and traffic control devices to control off-highway motor vehicles, including, but not limited to, the following:

(A) Devices to warn of dangerous conditions, obstacles, or hazards.

(B) Designations of the right-of-way for regular vehicular traffic and off-highway motor vehicles.

(C) A description of the nature and destination of the off-highway motor vehicle trail.

(D) Warning signs for pedestrians and motorists of the presence of off-highway motor vehicle traffic.

(4) Require that off-highway motor vehicles subject to the pilot project meet the safety requirements of federal and state law regarding proper drivers' licensing, helmet usage, and the requirements pursuant to Section 38026.5.

(5) Prohibit off-highway motor vehicles from traveling faster than 35 miles per hour on highways designated under this section.

(6) Include an opportunity for public comment at a public hearing held by the county in order to evaluate the pilot project.

(c) The pilot project may include use of a state highway, subject to the approval of the Department of Transportation, or any crossing of a highway designated pursuant to Section 38025.

(d) (1) By selecting and designating a highway for combined use pursuant to this section, the County of Inyo agrees to defend and indemnify the state against any and all claims, including legal defense and liability arising from a claim, for any safety-related losses or injuries arising or resulting from use by off-highway motor vehicles of a highway designated as a combined-use highway by the Inyo County Board of Supervisors pursuant to this section.

(2) This subdivision does not alter the requirements of subdivision (e).

(e) The County of Inyo shall not designate a highway for combined use pursuant to this section unless the Commissioner of the Department of the California Highway Patrol finds that designating the highway for combined use would not create a potential traffic safety hazard.

(f) Not later than January 1, 2016, the County of Inyo, in consultation with the Department of the California Highway Patrol, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, shall prepare and submit to the Legislature a report evaluating the pilot project, and containing both of the following:

(1) A description of the road segments designated to allow combined use for over three miles, as approved or adopted by a majority vote of the members of the Inyo County Board of Supervisors.

(2) An evaluation of the overall safety and effectiveness of the pilot project, including its impact on traffic flows, safety, off-highway vehicle usage on existing trails, incursions into areas not designated for off-highway vehicle usage, and nonmotorized recreation.

(3) A description of the public comments received at a public hearing held by the county in regards to an evaluation of the pilot project.

(g) (1) A report submitted pursuant to subdivision (f) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

(2) This section shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2017, and as of that date is repealed, unless a later enacted statute, that is enacted before January 1, 2017, deletes or extends that date.

SEC. 5. Section 38026.5 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

38026.5. (a) In accordance with subdivision (c) of Section 4000, a motor vehicle issued a plate or device pursuant to Section 38160 may be operated or driven on a local highway, or a portion of the local highway, that is designated pursuant to Section 38026 or 38026.1 if the operation is in conformance with this code and the vehicle complies with off-highway vehicle equipment requirements specified in this division.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), it is unlawful for a person using an off-highway vehicle on a combined-use highway to do any of the following:

(1) Operate an off-highway motor vehicle on the highway during the hours of darkness.

- (2) Operate a vehicle on the highway that does not have an operational stoplight.
- (3) Operate a vehicle on the highway that does not have rubber tires.
- (4) Operate a vehicle without a valid driver's license of the appropriate class for the vehicle operation in possession.
- (5) Operate a vehicle on the highway without complying with Article 2 (commencing with Section 16020) of Chapter 1 of Division 7.